

**Approved Minutes
Vermont Downtown Board
10/27/2014**

Calvin Coolidge Conference Room, 6th Floor, National Life Bldg., Montpelier

Members Present:

- ☒ Noelle MacKay (*chair*), Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- ☒ Karen Songhurst for Chris Cole, Agency of Transportation (arrived during Tax Credit Process and Policy Review)
- ☒ Jen Mojo, Agency of Natural Resources
- ☒ Michael Desrochers, Department of Public Safety
- ☒ Caitlin Corkins for Laura Trieschmann, State Historic Preservation Officer
- ☒ Peg Elmer Hough, Smart Growth Appointee
- ☐ Elizabeth Finlayson, VT Association of Chamber Executives
- ☐ Charles Jacien, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- ☒ Michael McDonough, Gubernatorial Appointee from Bennington
- ☐ Ron Redmond, Gubernatorial Appointee Representing Downtown Organizations
- ☐ Michael Munson, Vermont Planners Association
- ☒ Ron Shems, Natural Resources Board
- ☒ Peter Gregory (*vice-chair*), Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (departed during the Designation Renewal Process Review)

Attending Community Planning and Revitalization (CP+R) Team Members: Chris Cochran, Faith Ingulsrud, Gary Holloway, Richard Amore and Annina Seiler.

Guests: Charles Reeves, Penny Cluse LLC; Alice Merrill, Plainfield Selectboard Chair; Will Colgan, Plainfield Planning Commission Chair.

Chair Noelle MacKay brought the meeting to order at 1:07 pm in the Calvin Coolidge Room, 6th floor of the National Life Building, Montpelier.

1. Approval of Minutes from September 22, 2014

Peter Gregory made a motion to approve the draft September 22, 2014 minutes and Peg Elmer Hough seconded. Peter Gregory requested that the minutes be altered to note his departure during the Montpelier Growth Center Review rather than after the Colchester New Town Center discussion and that a line be added to the Overview of Public Street Tree Policy to note Board concern about taking on VTrans responsibility. A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: Michael Desrochers, Michael McDonough, Peg Elmer Hough, Peter Gregory, Ron Shems and Noelle MacKay. Abstained: Caitlin Corkins and Jen Mojo. Motion carried.

2. Public Comment Period

Noelle MacKay opened the meeting to public comment: there were no comments.

3. Review Tax Credit Process and Policy

In July, the Downtown Board awarded Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits to 37 projects around the state. Five projects did not receive tax credits, as funding was exhausted. The applicant of one of these projects, Charles Reeves of Penny Cluse, LLC was disappointed by the results and wrote a letter to Commissioner MacKay expressing his concerns about the process by which projects are awarded tax credits. Charles was given time to express his concerns to the Board. The Board then reviewed and discussed tax credit process and policy. Members thanked Charles for his comments to improve the process. Members agreed to re-consider the role of local downtown organizations as part of the application process and asked for the opportunity to score sample applications and discuss these results at a meeting prior to the final award meeting each year. Additionally, the Board made clear a preference to allocate recaptured funds as soon as possible rather than hold these funds over to the next fiscal year.

Peter Gregory made a motion to use recaptured Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Funds, if they become available, to award tax credits sequentially to the four applications from the FY15 round which were not funded and who received an average score of 11. Peg Elmer Hough seconded and the motion passed 9-0. The Board will be presented with the option to fund applications which scored an average of 10 or less if recaptured funds become available.

4. Revisit Village Center Boundary – 1 – Richard Amore

Town of Plainfield – Plainfield Village Center

Richard presented the Town of Plainfield's request to reconsider the September 2014 Village Center designation boundary to include the Park & Ride and review updated parcel classification. The Town submitted an updated map with the corrections and evidence of the boundaries affect on incentives for VTrans grant programs. Staff recommends amending the designated Village Center boundary as requested by the community and as originally proposed.

Richard introduced Will Colgan and Alice Merrill who spoke on behalf of the Town of Plainfield, noting the importance of the Park & Ride, not only for residents, but for visitors to the community as well. The Park & Ride serves a larger community and recreation function. It serves as a trail-head for the Cross Vermont Trail with parking, a canoe/kayak launch access to the Winooski River, a transit stop and shelter for the GMTA US 2 commuter bus, and is connected to the village by sidewalks. It is an important part of the village and the community's revitalization efforts and they hope to install lighting in the near future.

Board discussion ensued. Members voiced concern that designation boundaries not be expanded simply to obtain incentives. However, it was argued that the context is important – and in this case, the facts of this boundary reconsideration are tied to the smart growth principles, village revitalization, walkability, and transportation options. Members expressed an interest in reserving time at a future meeting to discuss policies governing designation boundaries.

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to approve the amended boundary for Plainfield Village Center as recommended by staff. Ron Shems seconded and the vote passed 8-1. Peter Gregory voted against.

Village Center Overview and De-Designations – 2 – Richard Amore

Richard Amore presented the Village Center Summary identifying suspensions, upcoming renewals and anticipated new applications.

Town of Glover – Glover and West Glover Village Center

Richard noted that the 90 day suspension period for Glover Village Center and West Glover Village Center has expired. A renewal application was not submitted and the Town communicated with CP+R staff notifying them that they do not want to renew their application.

Peter Gregory made a motion to de-designate Glover Village Center and West Glover Village Center. Karen Songhurst seconded and the motion passed 9-0.

5. Old Business/New Business

- **Announcements:**

- Chris Cochran informed the Board of Green Mountain Power (GMP) approval of a joint DHCD and VEIC proposal to target \$150,000 in efficiency investments in downtowns and villages located within CVPS' former service area. If approved by the Public Service Board, the funding will expand the growing network of electric vehicle charging stations and offer special, enhanced incentives and technical support to improve building efficiency and reduce the operating costs for businesses location in designated downtown and villages.
- Karen Songhurst announced a public meeting in White River Junction on November 17th for the Northern New England Intercity Rail Initiative, a study to examine opportunities and impacts of higher speed intercity passenger rail service between Boston and Montreal.
- Karen Songhurst announced the completion of two major segments of the Autoroute 35 project in Quebec which significantly shortens the highway trip between Vermont and Montreal.
- Richard informed the Board that ANR, VTRANS and ACCD have submitted a joint grant application for funds to help Lake Champlain basin communities install trees and green stormwater infrastructure along roads.

- **Designation Renewal Process Review:**

Gary Holloway and Faith Ingulsrud presented the Board with proposed updates to the designation renewal process for Downtowns and New Town Centers which will improve consistency among the various designations and clarify the guidance provided to communities. Updates include changes to application requirements and timeline, the addition of a community presentation and municipal plan integration requirements. Gary also shared the new quarterly main street reinvestment statistics Reporting form and guidance document. The Board requested clearer language in the renewal application regarding the ACT 59 municipal plan integration

requirements and an opportunity to discuss the use of reinvestment statistics at a future meeting.

Faith presented changes specific to the New Town Center renewal process. The Board discussed and agreed on a definition of municipal center plan as regards the application requirements. The Board agreed to review the renewal application for South Burlington's New Town Center designation in July 2015 to allow time for implementation of the new process and to honor the date communicated in the award letter. The Board also agreed, based on the recommendation of CP+R staff, to review South Burlington's Neighborhood Development Area designation, awarded in May 2014, five years after the award, in May 2019, and to combine the renewal with the underlying New Town Center designation renewal.

On a general question about the date of future renewals, the Board confirmed that renewals are due five years from the date of the most recent renewal rather than based on the original designation date.

- **Schedule November and December Board Meetings:**
The Board agreed to cancel the December Board meeting due and to re-schedule the November Board Meeting for December 1, 2014.
- **2015 Downtown Conference – June 5, Burlington:**
Noelle announced the June 5th date of the annual Historic Preservation and Downtown Networking Conference.

6. Adjourn

Peg Elmer Hough made a motion to adjourn. Karen Songhurst seconded and the motion passed 8-0. The Downtown Board meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Annina Seiler